

*“ASREN is a non-profit company with limited liability (GmbH) and is officially registered in Germany, under the umbrella of the League of Arab States. The main goal is to connect Arab institutions among themselves and to the globe through high-speed data-communications networks. Such networks will enable sharing and access to a variety of R&E services and applications in addition to utilization of highly sophisticated and technologically advanced computing resources available only at very few institutions in the world.”*

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## e-AGE19 Conference - Groundbreaking Research and Education Networks



ASREN

**e-AGE19**

“GROUNDBREAKING  
RESEARCH & EDUCATION  
NETWORKS”

*Abu Dhabi, UAE  
11-12 December 2019*

The graphic features the ASREN logo (two overlapping hexagons, one blue, one orange) and the text 'e-AGE19' in large, bold, orange and blue letters. Below it, the conference title is in quotes. At the bottom, the location and dates are listed in orange italics. The background of the graphic shows a city skyline at sunset.

The e-AGE conference had established itself as an important venue for networking among experts and scientists. In 2019, e-AGE will be held at Khalifa University in Abu Dhabi, UAE during 11 - 12 December 2019. This year the focus will be on demonstrated successes in using research

and education e-Infrastructures and a need for interoperable high speed networks at national, regional and international levels. In short words, e-AGE19 is coming with “GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH AND EDUCATION NETWORKS” as the main theme of the conference.

e-AGE19 will include events, workshops and meetings centered around the following:

- e-AGE Annual Conference
- The 12th Event on Euro-Mediterranean e-Infrastructure
- The 9th annual shareholders meeting of ASREN
- EUMEDCONNECT3 Project meeting
- AfricaConnect2 Project meeting
- Internet2 Middle East SIG Meetings
- Workshops dedicated for e-Infrastructure users

Moreover, special sessions will be dedicated to specific domains, mainly focusing on experiences in connectivity and e-Infrastructure, applications and services across a variety of scientific domains. It is also important to show how research infrastructure creates tangible benefits to communities and collaborations. It is still critical to demonstrate how research connectivity can promote collaboration and innovation. Different discussions will be stimulated during e-AGE to drive outcomes and concrete results on practical steps towards developing a regional e-Infrastructure.

Authors are invited to submit full papers reporting on their original and unpublished

research in e-Infrastructures and computational and data-intensive sciences. All papers will be peer-reviewed for relevance, quality and originality of research.

Posters are also welcomed, featuring a poster at e-AGE will serve as an excellent advertisement for your work, and can act as a great conversation starter with e-AGE participants.

Topics of interest include, but not limited to:

- Scientific computing and data-intensive e-Science in areas related to energy, environment, health, climate, water, agriculture, biology, economy, medicine, as well as in social sciences and humanities.
- Perspectives on NRENs, including challenges, operation, sustainability, funding, governance, business models, security and services.
- Problem-solving environments, Virtual Research Environments, Science Gateways and collaborative tools, applications and services.
- Education and e-Learning Technologies, access to educational resources, repositories, libraries and contents, cloud, grids, parallel and distributed computing, and high performance computing.
- Internet technologies and trends, Internet of Things, Security, SDN and AAI.
- Artificial Intelligence tools, deep learning, big data, and open science platforms.

For more details, please visit the conference website at: <http://asrenorg.net/eage19/>



## National research network - A ‘good step on a rocky road’

Mauritania, the country with the world’s most expensive internet costs, is the seventh African Arab country to establish a National Research and Education Network (NREN) to promote internet access to global educational resources and facilitate interaction among universities and research institutions at national and regional levels.

The NREN, which will be linked to European networks, was announced by Mauritanian Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Sidi Ould Salem at a sub-regional workshop held under the theme “National Academies of Science of the Least Developed Countries to support the 2030 Agenda” in Nouakchott, Mauritania on 25 September, according to the Mauritania News Agency.



According to Yousef Torman, managing director of the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN), a national research and education network in Mauritania will “facilitate and enable researchers, academics and students to extend their work at the continental level through sharing their own resources with others and to access others’ resources.

“We have evidence that the research and education communities in Mauritania desperately need access not only to the commercial internet but also to access research and education contents and resources in addition to collaboration ... at both regional and international levels,” he said.

### Costs, speed and penetration

Despite the envisaged advantages of the network, concerns have been raised about the country’s current internet capacity and costs.

Hilmi Salem, research professor and higher education expert, described the NREN as a “good step forward on the rocky road towards supporting the needs of the research and education communities in Mauritania”, but said there were concerns around the price of internet connectivity, speed and penetration. His concerns are borne out by statistics which show that out of a Mauritanian population of about 4.7 million (4,661,149), only 969,519 have access to the internet. In addition, Mauritania is ranked by Cable at 204 out of 207 countries when it comes to internet speed. The country also has the most expensive internet in the world.

Torman confirmed the situation, saying: “The main challenges that face establishing NRENs and having them connected to the other NRENs include telecommunication pricing which is a result of monopoly and unregulated telecom markets in Africa.”

### **Benefits**

According to Ane Turner Johnson, associate professor of educational leadership at US-based Rowan University, research and education networks enable universities to pool limited resources to purchase commodity internet more cheaply than on their own.

“This is a huge win for universities, specifically enabling teachers and researchers to leverage the internet for education, innovation, research, and development in the country,” she told University World News. Johnson, who is a researcher of higher education with a focus on conflict, gender, networks and governance in Africa, said the network should focus on “creating close relationships between the member institutions, so that they may learn from each other how to employ their new resources for the best effect”. She said the new network and its member institutions should also consider how to support research efforts that create contextualised solutions to national development challenges.

The new Mauritanian NREN is the seventh in the 10 Arab African countries after the Egyptian Universities Network, Algerian Research Network, Moroccan Academic and Research Wide Area Network, Somali Research and Education Network, Tunisia National Academic Network and the Sudanese Research and Education Network, according to ASREN.

While alliances have been established for the promotion and establishment of interconnections between NRENs in West and Central Africa as well as East and Southern Africa and the West and Central African Research and Education Network, Salem said “so far no alliance for NRENs in North Africa were established yet”. However, there appear to be a number of other opportunities for NRENs. “More initiatives are taking place at the continental level and every country in Africa should join these projects and activities that can benefit from using NRENs,” Torman said. These include the African Open Science Platform and the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) and Africa initiative.

“ASREN is also working very closely with the other African regional research and education networks (WACREN and UbuntuNet Alliance) to establish a pan-African cloud service and other collaboration services under the AfricaConnect3 Project which spans four years,” Torman said.

For more details, please visit the conference website at:

<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190930143045730>

## ASREN and GEANT Convene the EUMEDCONNECT3 and AfricaConnect2 Cluster3 Meetings in AUB



The Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) and the European Academic and Research Network (GEANT) have conducted the EUMEDCONNECT3 and AfricaConenct2 Cluster3 project meetings in Beirut during 12-13 September 2019 at the American University of Beirut that generously hosted the meeting.

In addition to ASREN and GEANT, the meeting was attended by representatives of research and education networks form Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan, UAE, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria. The Synchrotron-Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME) was also present in the meeting.

The meeting started by presenting the current status and plans of the projects (EUMEDCONNECT3 and AfricaConnect2) and the plans for AfricaConenct3 and EUMEDCONNECT4. All participants then presented and discussed the status of connectivity and services at each NREN. ASREN also presented a report on its activities and plans especially under the upcoming AfricaConenct3 Project. In addition to connectivity, ASREN will also focus on capacity building, advocacy, user engagements, and services including clouds, open access and open data, earth observation.

The European Union co-finances the EUMEDCONENCT3 and AfricaConenct2 Projects to support the developments of e-Infrastructures in Africa and Mediterranean region with GEANT and ASREN are responsible for the implementation of these projects for the Mediterranean and North Africa. GEANT also cooperates with WACREN and Ubuntunet Alliance for implementing the africaConect2 project in the rest of Africa.

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